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**“There are Public Libraries in Lisbon,
Which are by no Means So Bad
as Some Travellers Would Describe Them.”
European Travellers Visiting Portuguese Libraries
from 1760 to 1850**

Students in the 18th century often attended lectures on the question of how to travel most effectively in order to prepare them for their own post study travels to round off their education. In these lectures, their attention was drawn to specific institutions, which they should visit to get a complete impression of the country in which they were travelling. Amongst others, they were recommended to visit collections, learned institutions and scholars to get an overall view of the state of the arts and sciences in the different countries.

Professor Johann David Köhler published an introduction for travelling scholars visiting libraries, antiquity rooms and art galleries and viewing paintings, mineral cabinets and coin collections in 1762 in Frankfurt and Leipzig. “Bücher zu kennen”, he wrote in the first chapter entitled “Von Bibliotheken” (“On Libraries”), “ist allen Gelehrten unentbehrlich. Daher denn auf Reisen die Bibliotheken zuerst zu besuchen sind, wozu große Klugheit erfordert wird”¹ (Köhler 1762: 5).

He divided libraries into two categories: public and private. He described public libraries as being those to which everyone has access including university libraries, the libraries of learned societies and city libraries. In Köhler’s eyes, priority should be given to visiting public libraries, because they contain wide-ranging, regularly updated collections covering all sciences and so were the best places at which to gain

1 To know books is essential for all scholars. For this reason, when travelling, libraries should be first port of call. This necessitates a large dose of prudence (translated by R. M.).

an overview of the current state of the country's literary and scientific achievements.

The book also recommended travellers to go to the libraries at the appropriate time, meaning during the opening hours, to familiarize themselves with the users' regulations and then to ask for the catalogue, which "entweder locales, nach der Ordnung der Bibliothek, oder materials, nach der Materie der Bücher, oder alphabetici, nach der Ordnung des Alphabets, eingerichtet sind"² (Köhler 1762: 7). Travellers are also recommended to study both printed and handwritten books.

In the 18th century, European scholars were connected by an extensive network of correspondence and mutual visits. Many scholars and authors also worked as librarians, such as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in Wolfenbüttel. In Portugal, the university professor António Ribeiro dos Santos was first director of the university library in Coimbra, then of the Royal Public Court Library in Lisbon and the historian Alexandre Herculano headed the private library of the royal family in the Ajuda Palace.

But it seems that only relatively little was known in the rest of Europe about literature and the sciences in Portugal. Introductions to travel descriptions of the time regularly reiterate the fact that Portugal was probably the European country about which the least information was available. This was backed up by scholars as well as by other travellers.

A bibliography published in 1857 with German titles on the subjects of geography and travel literature mentioned only 33 titles on Portugal (Engelmann 1857: 770-772).

This article will first show, which libraries – that is libraries in the function of public places where information about science and literature was available and contacts with other scholars could be made – existed from the mid-18th to the mid-19th century in Portugal.

Afterwards it will examine the impressions recorded in the journals of travellers visiting Portuguese libraries.

Finally the article will show the conclusions drawn by these travellers concerning the status of the arts and sciences in Portugal and

2 "will be arranged either according to the location of the books in the library, by topic or alphabetically" (translated by R. M.).

with respect to the integration of that country into European knowledge networks.

1. The Portuguese libraries

As in other countries, the history of libraries in Portugal starts in the Middle Ages with monastic and private libraries. The number of collections increased from the 15th century, as well as the number of volumes each one contained, thanks to easier access to new books after the introduction of letterpress printing.

The oldest public library in Portugal, following Köhler's definition, is the university library in Coimbra. The university was founded in 1288. The first instance of a book collection here dates from 1513: it is the acquisition of 58 volumes for the library from the Chair of Canon Law, Diogo Lopes (Braga 1892: 418). From the university statute of 1591 we learn that the person in charge of the library should be educated in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, that the opening hours were from eight to eleven in the morning and from two to five in the afternoon, that the books were arranged in the shelves according to faculty and that they were chained, as a measure against theft. We know that similar regulations were in place in other European university libraries of the time, for example in Salamanca. Every three years the library received 100 Cruzados for the acquisition of new books (Madahil 1932: 170).

A separate building to house the library was constructed between 1717 and 1725. In 1742 the library was opened for use and the king ordered that the university should employ any surplus funds to expand the book collection (*Grande Enciclopedia Portuguesa e Brasileira* 1940: 652). From 1777 to 1795 the Chair of Canon Law, António Ribeiro dos Santos was library director.

In 1834 monasteries and convents in all parts of Portugal were dissolved by royal decree and as a result the university library received around 100,000 volumes (Peres 1943: 377).

In Lisbon, in 1795, preparations were made for the opening of a Royal Public Court Library, later the National Library. The collection of the Royal Censorship Department, *Real Mesa Censória*, which in 1775 already comprised more than 60,000 volumes, formed the founding collection of this new institution (Biblioteca Nacional 1996: 11-

12). A considerable part of these holdings came from the libraries of the Jesuits, who were forced to leave Portugal in 1759.

Furthermore, the president of this institution, Manuel do Cenáculo, had royal permission to sell any duplicates and to use the proceeds to purchase new books for the collection. In 1773 he drew up a plan for the construction of a new library building to enable the appropriate administration of the collection (Domingos 1994: 62). The plan illustrates his specifications for a universal academic library.

The library of the Royal Censorship Department probably allowed limited public use until it was dissolved in 1794.

Its holdings were used to found a new institution two years later: the Royal Public Court Library. António Ribeiro dos Santos was appointed librarian. The applicants for the other positions in the new library were examined in basic bibliographical and book historical knowledge and had to prove their ability in foreign languages.

From 1805 all printing and publishing houses in Portugal were obliged to supply this library with one free copy of each book they produced.³

When the monasteries and convents were dissolved in 1834, the Royal Public Court Library also received many of their collections. In 1836 the institution was renamed the National Library of Lisbon and in 1857 owned around 147,000 volumes (Biblioteca Nacional 1996: 24).

The ideas of the liberal revolution of 1820 resulted in the founding of more public libraries all over the country, starting with the Royal Public Library of the City of Oporto in 1833, followed by Vila Real, Braga and Ponta Delgada.

In all cases the founding collection consisted of collections from dissolved monasteries and convents.

Another Portuguese library which aroused travellers' interest was the library in the monastery of Mafra, which was built between 1717 and 1730. In the 18th century this library was also used by the members of the royal family during their stays in Mafra and by the beginning of the 19th century it owned several thousand volumes.

3 Portuguese National Archive: IANTT: MR mc 3722.

After the closing of the monastery the library remained in its original location in Mafra and in 1842 a new librarian was appointed (Abecasis 1993: 97).

2. Travellers' impressions

Many libraries were destroyed by the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, such as the private library of the royal family and the libraries of many monasteries. In some cases, the ruins could still be seen decades later, as described by Beckford for example, when he visited the Theatine monastery in 1787: "We looked into the library, which lies in the same confusion in which it was left by the earthquake; half the books out of their shelves, tumbled one over the other in dusty heaps" (Beckford 1834: 203).

In contrast, the monastic library of Mafra was not damaged, and Mafra, being near Lisbon, could be visited relatively easily, so that many travellers were attracted to the building. In 1760 Baretti came to Mafra and recorded for his readers that:

Their library takes up a very large hall, besides a pretty large room. The hall contains little less than seventy thousand volumes, and the room about ten thousand as I was told. Amongst these last there are as many Portuguese books as could possibly be collected. [...] According to the father librarian, that lesser library is much more valuable than the greater. And in one respect he is certainly right. The books in the greater may be procured for love or money; but not those in the lesser, because Portuguese books are become very scarce since the earthquake. The fire that follow'd it, has destroyed many public and private libraries in this metropolis, and a Portuguese book of any note is now become as dear as a ruby. However the loss of Portuguese learning will scarcely be felt out of Portugal, as it never was in fashion any where, and will scarcely ever be. Few are the writers of this country who ever had a name abroad. [...] I skimm'd over several [...] Portuguese books in the space of four hours that I passed in that library. [...] The good-natured librarian was in raptures to see me so inquisitive about the learning of his country. [...] The large library at Mafra I had no time to examine. Yet I have seen enough of it to know that it is a very good one. Besides the best books of the learned languages, I am told that it contains some valuable manuscripts, particularly in Hebrew and in Arabic; and as I have seen several of the friars studying there, it is most probable, that some of them are learned (Baretti 1770: 238-245).

Beckford reported seventeen years later:

The collection, which consists of above 60,000 volumes, is locked up at present in a suite of apartments which opens into the library. Several well preserved and richly illuminated first editions of the Greek and Roman classics were handed to me by the father librarian; but my nimble conductor would not allow me much time to examine them (Beckford 1834: 134-135).

All Esther Bernard, a keen user of the Lisbon public libraries, could say about Esther Maфра in 1802 was that:

Das Innere des Klosters darf kein weiblicher Fuß betreten. Letzteres besitzt eine vorzügliche Sammlung mathematischer Instrumente und eine Bibliothek von fünf tausend Büchern. Aber meine weiblichen Augen durften von dem allen nichts sehen⁴ (Bernard 1802: 365).

After the dissolution of the monasteries and convents and during a period in which Maфра was not used by the royal family as a residence, travellers were less interested in visiting the building, as Ida von Hahn-Hahn described in 1836:

Sowol dies Schloß [Sintra] als der Ajuda-Palast lassen nicht die geringste Betrübniß in mir aufkommen, daß meine Zeit zu kurz ist um Maфра zu besuchen, welches einst, gleich dem Escorial königliche Residenz, Kirche, Kloster und Bibliothek war, aber jetzt verödet und verfallen daliegt, und keinen Ersatz für die mühselige Fahrt von vier Meilen auf schlechten Wege darbietet, als den Anblick eines ganz kolossalen Steinhaufens⁵ (Hahn-Hahn 1841: 348-349).

It is interesting to compare the number of volumes mentioned by the travellers: Baretti speaks of 80,000 volumes, and Bernard of 5,000.

The university library of Coimbra or indeed the university itself, are very seldom mentioned in the travellers' descriptions. Perhaps this is a result of the lack of infrastructure which made each journey through the country an unpleasant adventure. We can conclude that the university of the Portuguese Kingdom was not an attractive destination for foreign travelling scholars.

4 No female is allowed to set foot into the interior of the monastery, which owns an excellent collection of mathematical instruments and a library of 5,000 volumes. But my female eyes were not allowed to see them (translated by R. M.).

5 Neither the castle [Sintra] nor the Ajuda-Palace arouses in me the slightest sorrow that my time here is too short to visit Maфра, which once, like the Escorial, was royal residence, church, monastery and library, but now lies desolate and deserted, and offers no compensation for the arduous journey of 4 miles on poor streets other than the sight of an enormous stone heap (translated by R. M.).

Towards the end of the 18th century, Link observed:

It is not easy to judge of a library without studying the catalogue. The number of volumes is considerable; and from the description of the professor of botany, Brotero, it seems not to be deficient even in new books. Accordingly it is much visited and used by the students (Link 1801: 296-297).

In 1836 Eschwege reported that, although all doctoral candidates were obliged to pay an amount for the acquisition of new foreign books for the library, they remained a scarce commodity. He concluded that the money was obviously used for other purposes within the university (Eschwege 1837: 194).

Two years later, Alexander Wittich explained in his chapter about Portuguese libraries:

Die Universitäts-Bibliothek Coimbra's enthält nur fast ganz verschollene und antiquierte Werke über die einzelnen Theile der Wissenschaften. Eine Universität aber, die nicht auch die neueren wissenschaftlichen Forschungen besitzt, muss uns vorkommen wie einer, der die alten Schriftsteller der Griechen und Römer gelesen hat, von der Entdeckung des 4. und 5. Erdtheiles aber, oder von der Erfindung des Pulvers und der Buchdruckerkunst nichts weiß. Die hierher aus den Klöstern Coimbras selbst und der Umgegend zusammen geschleppten Bücher lagen noch im J. 1838 in buntem Gemisch darunter und darüber, und niemand schien bisher daran gedacht zu haben, dieselben zu ordnen⁶ (Wittich 1843: 205).

Almost all travellers to Portugal visited the city of Lisbon, and its libraries were the most frequented in the country. Scientists as well as other academics and other well-educated travellers – in those days this category was mostly made up of women – reported that they found opportunities for study here.

Link for example tells us: "There are public libraries in Lisbon, which, though far from ranking in the first class, are by no means so bad as some travellers would describe who have merely taken a cursory view of them" (Link 1801: 227). Such cursoriness lead to com-

6 The university library of Coimbra almost only contains forgotten and obsolete works on the individual sciences. And a university which does not possess the most recent scientific studies must appear to us as a scholar who has read the old Greek and Roman writers but knows nothing of the discovery of the 4th and 5th continents or of the invention of gunpowder and letterpress printing. Even today, in the year 1838, the books originating from the monasteries of the city and the region of Coimbra still lie about in utter disorder, and until now nobody has shown the slightest intention of putting them in order (translated by R. M.).

ments such as that of Marianne Baillie who claimed in 1825: "There are no circulating libraries to be found" (Baillie 1825: 11).

According to the travel diaries, the best equipped library in Portugal is the Royal Public Court Library.

Esther Bernard described its organization thus:

Diese Bibliothek, die ursprünglich den Jesuiten gehörte, und seit ihrer Vertreibung aus dem Lande mit weltlichen Büchern vermehrt und in Ordnung gebracht worden ist, besteht jetzt aus achtzig tausend Bänden, mit Innbegriff der Manuskripte, unter denen sich ein große Anzahl arabischer befinden. Sie ist in elf Zimmern vertheilt, und jedes derselben enthält einen eigenen Zweig der Wissenschaften. Doch füllen allein Kirchengeschichte, geistliche Wissenschaften und polemische Theologie fünf Zimmer aus. Das Zimmer, welches Welt- und Kirchengeschichte enthält, ist sehr reich an guten Karten [...]. In dem Zimmer, das den schönen Wissenschaften gewidmet ist, befinden sich fünf Ausgaben des Homers, von denen die späteste eine Baseler vom Jahr 1757 und sehr prächtig ist. [...] Einige englische Metaphysiker, als Locke u.a.m. stehen hier unangefochten von Fanatismus. Bücher in allen Sprachen sah ich hier, nur keine deutsche [...]. Alle Zimmer der Bibliothek sind mit Schreibmaterialien und Bequemlichkeiten zum Lesen versehen, und bleiben täglich Vor- und Nachmittags einige Stunden zum Lesen offen. Ich fand immer einige Leser darin, und zwar größtentheils Geistliche. Jedes Zimmer hat einen eigenen Bibliothekar, unter denen freilich weder ein Adelung, noch ein Biester ist, denn sie gleichen dem Hüter des heiligen Baums der Diana, der ein bloßer Hirte und wenig bekannt mit der Heiligkeit des Baumes war; aber sie sind sämtlich so äusserst gefällig und gütig gegen Fremde, dass sie den innigsten Dank jedes Reisenden verdienen (Bernard 1802: 237-239).

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- 7 This library, which was originally owned by the Jesuits and, since their expulsion from the country has been added to and ordered, now also comprises urbane volumes and consists of 80,000 books including manuscripts, amongst them numerous Arabic ones. It is arranged in eleven rooms, and each deals with an individual scientific discipline. However, five of the rooms are already occupied by ecclesiastical history, religious science and polemic theology. The room taken up by ecclesiastical and general history has a good collection of maps [...]. In the room which is dedicated to the arts, there are five editions of Homer, the newest of which was printed in Basle in 1757 and is very splendid. Some English metaphysicians like Locke and others are here unchallenged by fanaticism. I have seen here books in all languages except for German [...]. All rooms in the library are equipped with writing paper and offer comfort for reading, and they are open daily some hours in the morning and in the afternoon for visitors. I have always found some readers there, for the most part clergymen. Every room has its own librarian, amongst which however there is neither Adelung nor Biester, rather they are like the custodian of Diana's holy tree, who was merely a guardian and was unaware of the holiness of the tree. But they are all so extremely helpful and

Gustav von Heeringen visited this library in 1836 and, like Esther Bernard, was impressed by the friendliness of the librarians, by the high numbers of readers and by the functional facilities and summarises his impressions as follows:

Diese Einrichtung und die Größe und Schönheit der Räume stellt die Bibliothek [...] den besten Deutschlands und Frankreichs gleich, die Zahl ihrer Bände stellt sie in den zweiten und dritten Rang dieser Institute in andern Ländern, da selbe nicht mehr als 80-100.000 betragen wird⁸ (Heeringen 1838: 124).

He also visited the library in the Monastery of São Francisco where the books from the dissolved religious institutions of the Lisbon region were collected. He reported:

An den Wänden, vom Boden bis zur Decke, stand Buch an Buch, in Repositorien vertheilt, oder hinter vergitterten Schränken. Bleiche düstere Inschriften schauten von den verschiedenen Abtheilungen hernieder. Da hieß es: Teologia, Historia ecclesiastica, Historia antiga, Historia natural, Historiadores, Jurisprudencia, Actas de Santo Officio, Inquisição u.s.w., schwarze Inschriften auf weißen Tafeln, welche eine heilige Scheu einzuflößen im Stande waren, zugleich aber von den umfassenden literarischen Sammlungen in allen Fächern der Wissenschaften, die man hier vor sich sah, Zeugnis gaben⁹ (Heeringen 1838: 104-105).

In his opinion, an immense task awaited the librarian whose job it was to put the books in order. The attempt however would not be entirely successful. Decades later many of the books would be sold by weight as scrap paper.

Alexander Wittich reported that the total number of books collected here was around 300,000 and added:

kind towards foreigners that they deserve the heartfelt thanks of all travellers (translated by R. M.).

- 8 In terms of the equipment and the size and beauty of the rooms, the library is comparable with the best libraries in Germany and France, but the number of its volumes, which is not higher than 80-100,000, puts it into the second or third row amongst similar institutions in these countries (translated by R. M.).
- 9 Lining the walls from floor to ceiling stand rows of books, divided into disciplines or encased in barred bookshelves. Faded, gloomy inscriptions stare down from the different sections. They read: Teologia, Historia ecclesiastica, Historia antiga, Historia natural, Historiadores, Jurisprudencia, Actas de Santo Officio, Inquisição and so on, black inscriptions on white plaques, which were capable of instilling a holy awe. At the same time they were testament to a comprehensive collection of books covering all branches of science (translated by R. M.).

Man findet hier einige wichtige philologische Werke von Gelehrten des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts. Ferner verdient Erwähnung ein auf Pergament gedrucktes Fragment der Briefe Ciceros ad familiares. Es ist das älteste in Portugal gedruckte Buch und zeigt die Jahreszahl MCCCCLXVIII¹⁰ (Wittich 1843: 209).

The year must be a mistake. As far as we know, letterpress printing was first introduced to Portugal in 1487 (Musser 2001: 32).

Apart from the Royal Public Court Library in Lisbon, some other public or semi- public libraries which the travellers frequented are mentioned. Until 1834 these were, above all, the libraries of monasteries.

Link praises for example the library of the Benedictine monastery Nossa Senhora de Jesus:

Here is a very complete collection of portugueze [sic] and modern spanish [sic] literature; nor is there any want of french [sic] works, as, for instance, a complete set of the Encyclopedie per ordre des matieres (Link 1801: 229).

Sometimes, the travellers, don't find what they are looking for in the libraries, as James Edward Alexander describes for example in 1834:

I made diligent search for manuscripts, but was not successful in meeting with any of value; however, there is understood to be some curious ones in the libraries of some of the convents, as also in the public archives. They principally relate to the wars and discoveries in India and Africa, and new information may be gathered from them relating to Abyssinia; it was, however, very difficult to get even a sight of any of them, as from the bad arrangement of the libraries it is almost impossible for a person to lay his hands on what he wants (Alexander 1835: 211).

3. Travellers conclusions

So, what did the travellers conclude about progress in the sciences and literature in Portugal after visiting the country's libraries?

Baretti wrote in the mid-18th century during his visit to Mafra, that:

Few are the writers of this country who ever had a name abroad. *Ossorio* the Latin Historian is certainly a name much considered in the literary

10 There are some important philological works by scholars of the 17th and 18th centuries. A fragment of Cicero's *Epistulae ad Familiares* printed on parchment also deserves to be mentioned. It is the oldest book printed in Portugal and is inscribed with the year 1468 (translated by R. M.).

world, and that of *Camoens*, the Portuguese Epic. [...] Yet the works of these two are more commended than read (Baretti 1770: 241).

And he mentioned:

The Portuguese have a Dictionary of their own language which is much commended both by themselves as by foreigners. But it was not the work by a native. Father Bluteau, a French Jesuit, compiled it. It is printed in eight or nine large quarto volumes (Baretti 1770: 243-244).

Baretti finally summarised: "Other observations have as yet given me no great idea of the common sense of this nation" (Baretti 1770: 280). But he conceded that it would be necessary to spend a longer time in the country in order to come to a well-founded opinion.

Around 1800 Esther Bernard said:

Portugal hat jetzt keinen einzigen Schriftsteller von einiger Bedeutung; indeß erlaubt dies nicht den Schluß, dass es in diesem ganzen Lande jetzt keine Köpfe giebt, welche schriftstellerische Fähigkeiten besitzen¹¹ (Bernard 1802 : 272).

In a later letter she stated more precisely:

Auch jetzt wird zuweilen in diesem Lande etwas Gutes geschrieben, aber man lernt es im Auslande nicht kennen, weil es in einer Sprache geschrieben ist, die man weder unter die todten, noch unter die lebendigen, sondern gewissermaßen noch unter die ungeborenen zählt¹² (Bernard 1803: 134-135).

And she added:

Dazu kommt Portugals Entfernung von dem gebildeten Europa, welche allein schon den Ideentausch mit andern Nationen erschwert. Hier landen nur Kaufmannsschiffe mit Waaren, und äußerst selten besucht einmal ein Reisender, der kein Kaufmann ist, diese Küste. Auch ist die portugiesische Sprache so wenig bekannt, daß auf den Absatz eines portugiesischen Werks ins Ausland gar nicht zu rechnen ist, und wer sich entschliesse, bloß für Portugal zu schreiben, würde schwerlich bei der mässigen Auflage, die Unkosten für Druck und Papier herausbringen. Denn

11 Portugal has, at this time, not a single writer of any importance; but one must not draw from this the conclusion that, in the entire country, there are no minds capable of displaying literary talent (translated by R. M.).

12 Even in these times, there is something of worth written now and again in this country, but these works are not read in foreign countries, because they are written in a language which belongs neither to the category of dead languages nor to that of living languages, but which may still, to a certain extent, be seen as one of the unborn languages (translated by R. M.).

Vielleserey ist gewiß der Fehler dieser Nation nicht¹³ (Bernard 1802: 273-274).

Link's travel description supported this view: "All books treating of scientific subjects are printed at the expense of the queen, the number of readers being too small for any bookseller or printer to gain by them" (Link 1801: 225-226).

Marianne Baillie too claimed, that the Portuguese were not very interested in reading and literature:

It is very rarely that one sees a room furnished with books; but this ought not to excite surprise in a country where foreign literature, until lately, has been prohibited, as dangerous to church and state (Baillie 1825: 135).

Von Heeringen described:

Ich glaube in der Tat, daß Portugal, ausgenommen die politische, im jetzigen Augenblick nur eine sehr unbedeutende Literatur hat. Bekanntlich war sie einst glänzend, Dichter, Philosophen, Redner, Geschichtsschreiber, Mathematiker, Geographen, Naturhistoriker und andere Gelehrte, welche das geistige Leben einer Nation bilden, waren [...] vorhanden. [...] Mit Pombal und Johann V. beginnt eine neue Ära für Portugals Literatur; wir sehen Akademien begründen, für den öffentlichen Unterricht erweiterte Anstalten treffen, ausländische Gelehrte an die Hochschule berufen und von allen Seiten den schöpferischen Funken zünden; Gedankensysteme erwachen, und ich könnte eine lange Liste von Namen entwerfen, die in den verschiedenen Gebieten der Literatur glänzten und – mit Ausnahme des großen Epikers – alle frühern überstrahlten¹⁴ (Heeringen 1838: 116-117).

13 [Another problem is] Portugal's geographical distance from learned Europe, which already makes the exchange of ideas with other nations more difficult. Only trading ships land here, and it is a very seldom occurrence that a traveller who is not a trader visits this coast. Moreover, the Portuguese language is so little known, that authors cannot expect to sell Portuguese language works in foreign countries, and were they to decide only to write for Portugal, they would hardly make enough money to cover the expense of printing and paper. Too much reading is certainly not one of this nation's flaws (translated by R. M.).

14 I truly believe that at the present time Portugal, with the exception of political works, produces only insignificant literature. Once it was, famously, outstanding. They were all here: poets, philosophers, great speakers, historians, mathematicians, geographers, natural historians and other scholars who form the intellectual life of a nation. With Pombal and King John V a new era began in Portuguese literature; academies were founded, institutions were opened for public education, foreign scholars were offered the position of Chair at the colleges of higher education, and everywhere the creative spark was ignited; new ways of thinking emerged, and I could compose a long list of names of those who have shone in

For von Heeringen 'political works' meant above all political newspaper articles. He counted seven different newspapers in Lisbon alone. And there were another six political weeklies.

Alexander Wittich wrote that nobody who knows the Portuguese language and who spends any amount of time in the country could doubt the intellectual capacity of this nation. And he added:

Ihre Literatur, besonders die poetische, ist nicht unbedeutend und verdiente wohl, daß man ihr in unserem Vaterlande eine größere Beachtung angedeihen ließe. Und diese Literatur begann sich schon in einer Zeit zu bilden, als bei uns noch alles in tiefem Schlummer lag. [...] Portugal ist mit seiner Sprache und Literatur in Deutschland, bis vor kurzem noch, so ziemlich eine terra incognita gewesen, man hat von seinen Schriftstellern, Camões allein ausgenommen, keine allzu hohe Vorstellung gehabt¹⁵ (Wittich 1843: 171-172).

What Wittich reported here for Germany could also be said for other parts of Europe.

The translation of Portuguese literature into other European languages was a relatively recent occurrence. For example, the first translation of the *Lusiades* into German was completed in 1806.

Travellers who were interested in literature and the sciences reported in general that Portuguese literature was unknown in other parts of Europe because of the language and the small numbers of each book published.

Moreover, they described it as difficult to get information about new editions on the book market. In bookshops too, this information was only available in part and there were no literary reviews in the country. The bookshelves in private houses in Portugal seldom contained the newest Portuguese literature. Amongst the higher classes above all French or English literature was read. Book clubs and reading circles were nearly unknown.

the various fields of literature and surpassed all others – with the exception of the great Camões (translated by R. M.).

- 15 Their literature, especially poetry, is not insignificant and deserves more recognition in our fatherland. And this literature was already beginning to develop in a time when our country still lay in deep slumber. Portugal, with its language and literature, was long terra incognita in Germany. Its writers were not well-regarded, with the exception of Camões (translated by R. M.).

That meant, libraries, in which all printed material was collected, were the best source of information about the newest developments in the sciences and literature.

The Royal Public Court Library held a special place amongst the libraries because it had the right to free copies of all published material.

Travellers with knowledge of the Portuguese language and who used public libraries were the best source of information regarding the intellectual life and literary production of the country.

It seems that, due to its geographical location and the political situation in which it found itself at this time, Portugal was almost completely excluded from scholarly discussion and from the networks of learned Europe. Therefore, the library visits mentioned in travel descriptions can contribute to a high degree to knowledge about Portuguese literature and the state of the sciences amongst the reading public all over Europe. A larger study would also take into account travellers' observations regarding bookshops, the university and learned societies and academies.

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